have demanded a higher royalty on oil extracted in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Central Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) For the block period 1996-99, Government of Assam has demanded royalty on crude oil at the rate of Rs. 1204/- per metric tonne as against the present 'on account' rate of Rs. 578/- per metric tonne.

(c) In view of the changed environment and the need to provide for a transparent and reasonable methodology for fixation of rates of royalty on crude oil payable to the State Governments, certain amendments to the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948 are considered necessary.

Rise in accidents at level crossings

424. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that level crossing accidents have lately been increasing;

(b) if so, the number, details and casualties involved in each during each of the three quarters in 1997-98 (so far); and

(c) what steps have been and are being taken to prevent and curb the accidents including manning and mechanising of level crossing and providing rail overbridges; *indicating the Eighth Plan targets* and achievements and provisions for it under Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The number of level crossing accidents on Indian Railways during April to October, 1997 was 36 as compared to 38 during corresponding period of last year. Casualties in level crossing accidents during 1997-98 are as under:

Period	Killed	Injured
Apr.-June '97	32	13
July-Sept. '97	17	78
October '97	17	26

(c) The sensitive unmanned level crossings will be, on a planned basis, after due prioritisation, converted into manned level crossing with the help of the State Govts. who have to invest the initial capital cost.

Railways construct Road over/Under bridges in lieu of existing busy level crossings i.e. having a traffic density of 100000 or more Train Vehicle Units. However, wherever the proposals are sponsored by the State Govts. or local authorities for replacement of a level crossing having lesser traffic units, they are also considered for replacement on deposit terms for which the entire cost of the construction and recurring maintenance are borne by the sponsoring body. Census on the level crossings are conducted every five years and when the level crossings are found busy i.e. having attained 100000 or more TVUs, they are considered for replacement with Road over/Under Bridges on cost sharing basis. Hence, no specific target in any particular plan is kept in this respect, but efforts are made to include maximum busy crossings proposed by State Govts.

Rail accidents

425. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rail accidents are on the increase;

(b) if so, the number of rail accidents that have taken place between 1st July, 1996 and 31st October, 1997 (date-wise and train-route-wise);